

Summary Minutes

Alexandria Waterfront Committee Meeting June 16, 2009

Members: Jay Atkinson
Christine Bernstein
Mel Fortney
Mike Geissinger
Doug Gosnell
Linda Hafer
Nathan Macek
Pete Peterson
John Renner
Paul Smedberg

City Staff: Roger Blakeley, Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities (RPCA)
Lt. Len Fouch, Police Department
Capt. Dianne Gittens, Police Department
Jim Hixon, RPCA
Yon Lambert, Transportation & Environmental Services (TES)
Karl Moritz, Planning & Zoning (P&Z)
Craig Perl, TES
Laura Seidler, RPCA

Guests: Diana Chamberlain
Susan Cohen
Dene Garbow
Mel Garbow
Matthew Harwood
Van Van Fleet
Douglas Wood

Welcome and Introductions

Committee members and guests introduced themselves.

Approval of Minutes

It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes of the May meeting.

Update on Waterfront Security

Blakeley reported that RPCA has moved forward with purchasing surveillance cameras for the marina piers. These would be installed within the coming weeks. Next, the City would proceed with installation of gates on the piers. He said that RPCA would need to re-approach the Board of Architectural Review for approval as the initial permit has expired.

Gosnell asked whether there was a number that boaters could call if marina security was unavailable. Seidler said that there was a phone number in place. Gosnell said that he had reported an incident on the piers the previous week because individuals were loitering on the pier. He said marina security and police were slow responding to the reported incident. Gosnell said that police may not have the marina's address (0 Cameron Street) in their dispatch system, which slows response times. Gosnell reported that he has had multiple incidents on his boat which has prompted him to install an alarm system.

In response to a question from Atkinson, Blakeley said that there would be placards stating that the cameras were in place as a deterrent.

Atkinson said that a work boat had been moored at the marina. He asked whether the boat has received permission to dock there and whether it received the necessary permissions from RPCA, BAR, and other City agencies to modify the dock. Gosnell said he would look into the issue.

Atkinson said he was concerned that the police department did not have the marina correctly geocoded in its dispatch system. Gosnell stated that this would be a topic of discussion for an upcoming meeting scheduled with the police department.

Van Fleet stated that 911 dispatch operators need to be able to respond to incidents via landmarks because addresses aren't always available in an emergency. Fouch responded that there is a required orientation for 911 dispatchers that includes a tour of the City.

Waterfront Flood Mitigation Study

Perl provided an update on the waterfront flood mitigation study. The study was begun several years ago. URS Corporation is the City's consultant for this study. URS had analyzed solutions, which had been ranked and evaluated. Nine potential solutions had been identified. A draft report would be released during the summer. TES would invite feedback from the public, including the Waterfront Committee, before finalizing the study. TES would coordinate the flood mitigation study with the waterfront planning study being led by P&Z. Perl would provide an update at the September Waterfront Committee meeting.

Waterfront Planning

Moritz distributed a flier announcing the waterfront plan charrette on June 27. Bernstein asked whether it was a full-day or drop in event. Moritz said it would be a full-day session.

Bicycle Safety

Gosnell requested information on the Police Department's efforts to enforce safe bicycling laws along the waterfront. Fouch stated that it was difficult to enforce

bicycling because the police are generally focused on enforcing violations by motor vehicles. He stated that there are semi-annual enforcement campaigns.

Lambert said that he coordinates bicycle pedestrian issues for the City (and is involved in the motor coach task force and other transportation issues). He said that there are twice-annual enforcement campaigns in Old Town and other heavily trafficked areas. In 2008, the Police Department issued more than 1,000 warnings and 400 citations to bicyclists. He said that the City receives a lot of comments that it is trying to unfairly target bicyclists, but the City responds that there are other users who are out there trying to use the Mt. Vernon Trail. Some clubs use the trail for training, which poses conflicts with other users. The City has initiated a number of bike outreach events, including bike ambassadors and training sessions. Usage of the Mt. Vernon trail has gone up dramatically since 1992, with the highest number of users counted at Belle Haven. The National Park Service is aware of an increasing number of runners using the trail for races, and has pushed back by charging higher fees to use the trail. The City wants people to use trails for recreation, but notes that group use is going up.

Gosnell said that stopping and starting is the most troublesome for bicyclists, which is why some bikers do not obey stop signs. He asked whether there been thought developing a training loop that does not use Old Town as a through route. Lambert said that bicycle organizations have publicized their own bike routes and it's difficult to monitor all of these options.

Fortney said that he has difficulty turning south from Porto Vecchio due to number of bikes that don't obey stop signs. Lambert said there had been discussion of installing a bike signal at this location.

Macek asked to what degree bicyclists need to stop to avoid being issued a citation. Gittens responded that enforcement of bike laws is at the officer's discretion. There's no requirement to fully stop and put down foot, but the bicyclist needs to make an effort to slow down, watch in all directions, and yield the right-of-way.

Presentation on Public Art

Matthew Harwood, Chair of the Public Art Commission, introduced a presentation on Art on the Waterfront by Cohen. Cohen said that the committee's mission was to respond to the City's art policy with an exciting concept that introduces art from around the world in City parks in a manner consistent with the features and context of each park. She said that art on the waterfront needs to work for Alexandria. The group's principal concept is an Art Walk, a walking path along the river separate from the bike path. The plan goes from Tide Lock Park south to Ford's Landing.

Highlights include:

- Decorative light sculptures in Tide Lock Park

- The promenade classique amphitheater near Tide Lock Park
- The Tide Lock itself as historical feature and artistic attraction
- Large public art sculptures in Rivergate Park
- Performing art in Oronoco Bay Park, such as a boxcar stage for small performances
- Cultural and performing arts center at Robinson Terminal North, a mixed-use center similar to Signature Theater in the Shirlington section of Arlington
- Sculptures at West's Point
- Storytelling, puppet shows, and other family events at Founder's Park
- Indoor market through the Torpedo Factory Food Pavilion leading to the marina docks behind it
- Temporary sculptures, light shows, or other events at the Torpedo Factory
- Reflecting pool and vertical garden in King Street Park
- Conversational seating and natural artwork in Waterfront Park
- Potomac River museum in newly-owned City property at 0 Prince Street
- Consolidated quarters for the Art League School at King and Union
- Capitalize on the jetty at Point Lumley
- Sculptures on either side of Robinson Terminal South
- Industrial-themed sculptures in Roberdeau Park
- Natural-themed sculptures in Shipyard Park, behind Riverside
- Thematic lighting in the Wilkes Street Tunnel
- Family themed art in Windmill Hill Park
- Development of Pomander Park dog park

Other concepts include:

- Adoption of green roofs
- Decorative man hole covers
- Conversational seating
- Artistic signage

In response to a question from Bernstein, Cohen said she hoped groups to which this was presented would endorse the arts as an element along the waterfront. Harwood said he hoped to see the concepts integrated into the waterfront planning process. Geissinger said it would be important for the Arts Commission to share its vision at the waterfront planning workshop.

Fortney said that some suggestions were for private property. Harwood responded that the plan is to cooperate with the private sector and look for opportunities for public-private partnership involving art.

Bernstein and Gosnell commended the Commission on the quality of the presentation and the vision it presents.

Smedberg said that funding of artworks would have to be a consideration. Harwood the committee had considering funding, and hoped to present a public art funding plan to the City in the fall.

Hafer said it was a nice overall plan, and elements could be incorporated as funds allow over time. She said it focused on more than just sculpture to include other elements of public art such as performing art.

Bernstein said there were organizations that could help to fund public art. She noted that the Founders Park Community Association sometimes donates fundraising proceeds to the community.

Smedberg said that waterfront lighting could add to the vibrancy of the waterfront. He said it could complement lighting on the new Wilson Bridge. He said when one looks at the waterfront now, day or night, there is no focal point.

Van Fleet commented that there was no mention of history in all the art. He said Alexandria is a historic city and there should more emphasis on the city's history. Hafer responded that sculpture incorporated into the art walk could help to interpret the city's history.

Gosnell asked what the Commission was seeking from the Waterfront Committee. Cohen said that it welcomed the Committee's endorsement of the concept. Harwood said he appreciated the Committee's support of public art in its waterfront principles document.

Bernstein moved to endorse the concepts presented by the Alexandria Commission for the Arts. Seconded by Hafer. Motion carried on a voice vote.

Desirable Waterfront Features Survey Results

This item was postponed to a future meeting.

Weddings in Founders Park

The committee discussed a recent request by a bride who contacted the mayor and a member of the City Council to hold a wedding in Founders Park. The City has said that Founders Park was not available for rental. Blakeley said that RPCA had denied the application. Seidler noted that weddings occur in City parks all the time but they are not approved by the City.

Gosnell suggested that the City should rent parks for weddings and other events, which could generate revenue for the City. Seidler said that the City was looking at ways to provide a venue for weddings, and was considering submitting a revised park rental policy as a waterfront planning proposal.

Announcements

Seidler said that lights are out in Founders Park due to a lightning strike and are being repaired.

The Waterfront Committee's annual Waterfront Walk would be June 24, 2009 beginning at 7:30 AM at Windmill Hill Park.

Adjournment

The Committee adjourned at 9:15 a.m.